AL-WAJEEZ
FI MANHAJIL-SALAFIS-SALEH

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF
THE EARLY MUSLIM GENERATION'S BELIEF

BY

ABDUL QADIR AL-ARNAOOT

TRANSLATED BY
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K. H. DABAS



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باللغة الإنكليزية

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عبد القادر الأرناؤوط



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DEDICATION

TO ALL MY MUSLIM BRETHREN
OLD (VETERANS) AND NEW!

TO ALL KNOWLEDGE SEEKERS
ALL OVER THE EARTH!

BEGINNERS, SEARCHERS AND SCHOLARS
WHO ARE EAGER TO LEARN
THE MUSLIM'S BELIEF!

I WHOLEHEARTEDLY DEDICATE
THIS HUMBLE WORK!

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

I would like to record my gratitude and special recognition to the author, our dear brother in Islaam and scholar in Hadeeth of the Prophet (pbuh) who, without any hesitation, permitted me to render his original Arabic work into English for the earnest and eager Muslims who are truly interested in learning about the Islamic belief from an authentic Islamic point of view. Warm thanks and keen gratitude are to Shaikh Abdul Qadir Al-Arnaoot for his kind permission for translation.

A special thanks also to my editor, who as a Muslim, strives very hard on the Path of Truth, Reality, better understanding of Islaam and a complete implementation of Islamic principles in life.

PREFACE

For many people the idea of the Islamic belief is a bit sophisticated, although it is very simple and might be crystal clear in the minds of the majority. Many of us need to clarify this idea by simple, clear, practical and self evident examples.

This booklet is, therefore a response to this dazzling dilemma. It leaves no room to wonder. All matters related to the pure, complete, authentic and practical belief in Islaam are well explained and efficiently pointed out.

Many books, pamphlets, lectures and hand outs have been written and presented in this regard. However, the idea of Islamic belief is still vague and hard to explain from an Islamically authentic point of view. Especially new Muslims who have not been exposed well to Islamic culture, life and education will definitely benefit from reading this simplified version of the Islamic belief.

This booklet aims primarily to serve this purpose. Also, many others (i.e. VETERANS) will surely benefit of such enlightened readings.

With this in mind, we present this humble work for the readers hoping and praying that Allaah, the Almighty will guide all our efforts to what please Him and benefit Muslims at large wherever they might be on earth.

Bismil-lah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahman

INTRODUCTION

All praise is due to Allaah, the Almighty, the Lord of the Worlds. Thy help we seek, Thy forgiveness we ask, and we seek refuge with Thy from our own evil and from the misdeeds we have committed against our souls. He who Allaah, the Almighty guides, will never be misguided. He whom Allaah, the Almighty misguides, there will be no guidance. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allaah, the Almighty. He has no partner. I bear witness that Muhammad, the peace and blessing of Allaah, the Almighty be upon him, is His servant and Prophet.

This brief summary about the belief of the early Muslim generations is written in response to many questions directed about this complex issue. Individuals from all walks of life, educational backgrounds, classes and various schools of thought have suffered in confusion when it comes to the understanding of pure Islamic faith or belief. Such people are not to be blamed due to the misconceptions of those who have addressed this important subject in the past. Such people did not previously take the initiative to review such an important matter in various scholarly Islamic sources. Muslim scholars have investigated this matter to the best of their abilities leaving no room for additions to what they have concluded. Therefore, it is imperative to review these sources before dealing with the issue of Islamic belief. Hence, I sought Allaah's guidance and prepared this brief summary about the belief of the early Muslim generations. I have based my research on the writings and the collections of the early Muslim scholars who are well accepted as authorities by the majority of Muslims. I have added my opinion in a few places where I felt

clarification or elaboration was needed. All references and sources used in my research have been included.

I pray Allaah, the Almighty that Muslims all over the world will benefit from this humble work. All praise is again due to Allaah, the Almighty, the Lord of the Worlds.

Abdul Qadir al-Arnaoot
Damascus 01-18-1411 H. = 08-09-1990

Bismil-lah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahman
In the Name of Allaah, the Beneficent, Most Merciful

Some basic linguistic and Islamic legal definitions:

Manhaj: Also known as: Nahj, Minhaj: The straight and clear path. Allaah, the Almighty stated in the Holy Qur'aan, 5:51:"*To each among you, We have prescribed a Law and an Open Way.*" This means that Allaah, the Almighty has determined a clear path, law and way of life to every Ummah (people.) To the Jews, there was the Torah as a guidance and an admonition to follow. As for the people of the Gospel, they also have their own guidance in their Scriptures. Similarly, Muslims also have been given their laws in the Holy Qur'aan.

Although the Scriptures differed in the laws and judgements they laid down, they were identical in terms of the concept of the oneness of Allaah, the Almighty. This idea is supported by a statement by Allaah's Apostle (pbuh): "*I am the one who is most worthy to support Jesus (pbuh) the son of Mary (raa) in both this world and the hereafter. Messengers (of Allaah, the Almighty) are but brothers from various mothers. Although their mothers are different, their religious faith is the same. (Moreover) there is no Prophet (who came) between myself and Jesus.*" This Hadeeth (statement) was reported by Bukhaaree and Muslim No. 2365 in the chapter Virtues of Jesus (pbuh) and reported on the authority of Abu Hurairah. This hadeeth indicates that all the prophets of Allaah, the Almighty agreed in the principle with the concept of monotheism, Allaah and the oneness of Allaah, the Almighty. However, as for the details of the laws, the Prophets (pbuh) may differ in opinion. Allaah, the Almighty stated in the Holy Qur'aan, 21:25: "*Not an apostle did We send before thee without inspiration sent by Us to him that there is no god but I. Worship and serve Me.*"

Allaah, the Almighty further stated in the Holy Qur'aan: *"For We assuredly sent amongst every people an apostle, (with the command): 'Serve Allaah, and eschew evil.' "* This reflects definite monotheism and singular belief in Allaah, the Almighty. As for legal system details, they may differ from one system to another.

<u>The Early Generation</u>: The generation who either accompanied Allaah's Apostle (ﷺ) and lived during his life time or those who came in contact with those people who directly knew and spent time with the Prophet (ﷺ) during his lifetime. Allaah, the Almighty stated in the Holy Qur'aan, 43:55-6: *"When at length they provoked Us, We exacted retribution from them, and We drowned them all. And We made them (a people) of the past and an example to later ages."* This means that such people became an example and a lesson for generations after them. Also, all forefathers of earlier generations are older and wiser than us. Thus, we shall also die as our forefathers died and become a lesson to our grandchildren as well. Al-Hasan al-Basri, the well-known early Muslim scholar used to offer a supplication for youngsters who die at early age, saying: "O Allaah! Let this young person be an early reminder for us!" The rightly guided companions of Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) who committed themselves to the faith were truly considered the pious and the rightly guided early generation of the Muslim Ummah (people.) All those who follow the same path are to be called the same as well. All those who practice the same principles are also to be called the same. All Muslims must follow the laws and commands stated in the Holy Qur'aan and Sunnah (traditions) of Allaah's Apostle (pbuh). All Muslims must base their understanding and life on the two major sources of the Islamic Shariah, the Holy Qur'aan and the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh). Additional sources of reference should include books written and related by the early generation scholars. It is a given fact that these scholars were truly committed and strong in their belief and sincere in their worship of Allaah, the Almighty.

Moreover, such generations were led by the Prophet (pbuh). As commanded by Allaah, the Almighty, we are to follow his example (pbuh). Allaah, the Almighty stated in the Holy Qur'aan, 59:7: *"So take what the Apostle assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you."*

Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) is the best example to follow and emulate. Allaah, the Almighty stated in the Holy Qur'aan, 33:21: *"We have indeed, in the Apostle of Allaah, a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in Allaah and the Final Day, and who engages much in the praise of Allaah."*

Furthermore, the Prophet (pbuh) is the one who delivered the heavenly message of Allaah, the Almighty to mankind. He is as a mouth piece of the heavens. Allaah, the Almighty stated in the Holy Qur'aan concerning the Prophet, 53:3-4: *"Nor does he say (ought) of (his own) desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him."*

Allaah, the Almighty also ruled that His Prophet (pbuh) must be the judge of all our living affairs. He, the Almighty stated in the Holy Qur'aan, 4:65: *"But no, by thy Lord, they can have no (real) faith, until they make thee judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against thy decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction."*

Yet, Allaah, the Almighty warned Muslims from disobeying his commands. He, the Almighty stated in the Holy Qur'aan, 2463: *"Let those beware who withstand the Apostle's order, lest some trial befall them, or a grievous penalty be inflicted upon them."*

In disputes, the early Muslim generations refer to both the Holy Qur'aan and the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh). Allaah, the Almighty stated in the Holy Qur'aan, 4:59: *"O ye who believe! Obey Allaah. Obey the Apostle, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to*

Allaah and His Apostle if you do believe in Allaah and the Last Day. That is best and most suitable for final determination."

The Apostle (pbuh) is indeed the one who delivered, clarified and explained the message of His Lord, Allaah, the Almighty. Allaah, the Almighty stated in the Holy Qur'aan, 16:44: *"That you may explain clearly to men what is sent for them, and that they may give thought."*

Moreover, Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) stated in one of his Hadeeth: *"Hold tight (abide by) my traditions and the traditions of the rightly guided companions (Caliphs) who succeed me. Bite on to it with your molars (hold onto it tightly.) Avoid all and any innovations. Every innovation is but a misguiding factor."*[1]

The best among the early generations were the companions of Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) who learned their religion from Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) directly with true and sincere faith. Those companions were described by Allaah, the Almighty in the Holy Qur'aan as follows, 33:23: *"Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allaah. Of them, some have completed their vow (to the extreme) and some (still) wait, but they have never changed (their determination.)"*

Such companions were those who did many righteous deeds which were mentioned in the Book of Allaah, the Almighty, 2:177: *"You the righteousness to believe in Allaah, the Last Day, the Angels, the Book, and the Messengers spend of your substance out of love for Him, for your kin, for the orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; fulfil the contracts which you have make; and be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing."*

Indeed, this verse sums up the true meaning of faith and belief which are the main characteristics of the people of the early generations. The Holy Qur'aan is the constitution of all the affairs of life. After the Holy Qur'aan in importance, follows the Sunnah of Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) the most blessed source of knowledge next to the Holy Qur'aan, the Book of Allaah, the Almighty. The Sunnah is, in fact, the most beneficial knowledge for both this world and the Hereafter. It is very much like gardens full of roses and flowers of various types and excellent scents. Sunnah contains the best of all things for this life and the hereafter. The third source of wisdom is the collective knowledge compiled by the early Muslim generations.

Moreover, the early generations lived in the best centuries that mankind has ever witnessed. Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) said about these centuries: *"The best amongst people are those who witnessed my (century) era, then those who come later, then those who comes after those. Then after, a people will come who testify to things without being asked for testimony. They betray others. They are not trustworthy. They do not fulfil their vows and they tend to be fat, in general."*(2)

The basic foundation on which the early generation scholars have adhered to and called others to follow are essentially the Holy Qur'aan and the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh) in totality and minute details of life. They further advocate strict monotheism and bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allaah alone. He has no partner. The early scholars also bear witness to the fact that Muhammad (pbuh) is the Prophet and slave servant of Allaah, the Almighty. Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) delivered the Message of Allaah, the Almighty in full. Such early Muslim scholars and believers recognised their Lord, the Almighty as He described Himself in the Holy Qur'aan and through the instructions of His Apostle (pbuh). The scholars based their knowledge on authentic and documented reports attributed to the Prophet (pbuh) or his rightly guided companions

known to be trustworthy, honest and truthful. Early generation scholars and believers confirmed the descriptions of Allaah, the Almighty in the Holy Qur'aan and as reported up on by the Prophet (pbuh). The scholars deny any resemblance of human attributes with Allaah, the Almighty. Further, they did not distort, abandon, change, amplify or adjusted any of the attributes of Allaah, the Almighty to suit their understanding.

Allaah, the Almighty stated in the Holy Qur'aan, 42:11: *"There is nothing whatever like unto Him. He is the One who hears and sees (all things.)"*

Imam az-Zuhri, the well-known scholar[(3)] once said: "Allaah, the Almighty declares matters to us. His Apostle (pbuh) delivered those declarations to us. We, Muslims, must submit fully to our Creator, Allaah, the Almighty."

Imam Sufyan bin 'Uyainah, a well-known scholar[(4)] said: "All descriptions that Allaah, the Almighty Has attributed to Himself in the Holy Qur'aan should only be interpreted by recitation and saying nothing about it."

Imam as-Shaf'iee, another well-known scholar[(5)] also said: "I believe in Allaah, the Almighty. I also believe in all that He, the Almighty sent down (revelations) as He, the Almighty desired. I also believe fully in the Prophet (pbuh) and whatever was reported truly on his behalf as he (pbuh) desired."

Thus, it is clear that well-known scholars of the Islamic Ummah agree collectively to believe in all the attributes, descriptions and qualities that Allaah, the Almighty bestowed unto Himself. Similarly, the scholars also believe in all explanations given by Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) concerning these attributes of Allaah, the Almighty. Such scholars agree and avoid any interpretations of these attributes which could be allegoric or symbolic.

Muslims all over the world are commanded and compelled to follow such noble scholars and rightly guided companions of the Prophet (pbuh) in hopes of being fully guided to the right path of truth and complete faith.

Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) warned Muslims against following any innovation in the religion. He (pbuh) informed us that such innovations are but misguiding and misleading as stated in this hadeeth stated earlier: "*Hold tight (abide by) my traditions and the traditions of the rightly guided companions (Caliphs) who succeed me. Bite on to it with your molars (hold on to it tightly). Avoid all and any innovation. Every innovation is but a misguidance.*"

Abdullaah bin Masoud (raa)(6) said: "Follow and do not innovate (your own ideas in terms of belief). The scholars that came before you sufficed you to exert unnecessary efforts in that regard."

Umar bin Abdul-Azeez (ra)(7) said: "One must not exceed (in his speculation and interpretation of) what the early Muslim scholars have reached (in terms of belief in Allaah, the Almighty and the Message of Islaam). Such scholars have not proceeded further based on firm belief and sound knowledge.

Imam al-Awzaiee (raa)(8) the well-known scholar once said: "Abide by the reports of the early Muslim generation scholars even if the people deny and refuse your opinion. Also, avoid the opinions of others even if presented to you attractively and in a most elaborate fashion."

It is reported that the early generation Muslim scholars believed the following: "Faith is a statement by the tongue, an action resulting from the limbs and determination by the heart and mind. Faith does increase by doings acts of obedience. But, faith decreases with acts of disobedience.

It is also reported that the scholars believed that all acts of good and evil are predestined according to the Will of Allaah, the Almighty. However, pure evil is not predestined and it is not Allaah, the Almighty who sanctions or condones it. This, of course, is in rejection of the belief of some people who say (without knowledge): "Everything is from Allaah, the Almighty, good or evil." It is a well documented fact that Allaah, the Almighty commends good only. He, the Almighty neither sanctions people to do evil, nor condones evil. Man has been given the freedom of choice to select his actions. Man is granted free will to choose his own beliefs and actions. Therefore, on this basis, man is subjected either to reward or punishment. Yet, man is given a choice to obey or disobey commands in general and will, therefore, be judged.

Allaah, the Almighty stated in the Holy Qur'aan, 18:29: "*Say: 'The Truth is from Your Lord. Let him who will, believe, and let him who will, reject.'* "

Furthermore, it was the belief of the early Muslim generation scholars not to reject someone's faith due to a sin committed, regardless of the severity of the sin. But, if one rejects and denies a tenet that is well established in the religion of Islaam, is known to all classes of people, confirmed in both the Holy Qur'aan and the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh) and is part of the collective agreement by the early generation Muslim scholars, then this person may be denounced and rejected from Islaam on these merits.

It was the firm belief of the early Muslim generation scholars to worship Allaah, the Almighty Alone. The scholars agree to set no partners, associates or rivals to Him, the Almighty. They ask no one to grant them anything, except Allaah, the Almighty. They seek help from no one but Allaah, the Almighty. They seek no mediation from any other creature. They depend upon no one but Him, the Almighty. They seek Allaah's help and assistance in

performing acts of obedience, sound and sincere worship and doing good deeds. They base their actions on the statement in the Holy Qur'aan, 5:38: *"Oh ye who believe! Do your duty to Allaah, seek the means of approach unto Him, and strive with might in His cause that ye may prosper."* This indicates that one must seek nearness to Allaah, the Almighty by good deeds and sound worship.

It was the belief of the early Muslim generation scholars that a prayer may be offered behind any Muslim, regardless of righteousness and piety as long as the performance of the prayer is sound and correct.

The Scholars never confirmed that a particular person or group of people will dwell in paradise or in the hellfire, with the exceptions of definite statements reported of or confirmed by Allaah's Apostle (pbuh). However, the scholars taught hope for paradise for the benefactors and concern for the future of those who do not enjoin good.

It was the belief of the early Muslim generation scholars that they testify to the fact that the ten companions who were given the glad tidings and promised paradise by Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) will, indeed, be in paradise. Moreover, all others who were promised paradise by Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) will also be in paradise. The Prophet (pbuh) did not speak in vain, but rather with the true revelation from Allaah, the Almighty.

It was the belief of the early Muslim generation scholars that all those who accompanied Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) are due great respect. The scholars avoided bringing up any of the bad characteristics of the companions. The affairs of the companions of the Prophet (pbuh) rest in the hand of Allaah, the Almighty. Muslims must not insult, curse or even talk ill about any of the companions. Muslims are ordered to respect the commands of Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) when he said: *"Do not curse my*

companions. By Allaah, the Almighty in Whose Hand is my soul. Spent (for the cause of Allaah) and the weight of Uhud (the mountain) cannot not be compared to the spending of a 'Mudd' (approximately 5 kg) or even half for the cause of Allaah, the Almighty."[9]

Muslims, however, must recognise that the companions of the Prophet (pbuh) were not infallible. Every human being makes mistakes except in the case of the Prophets (pbuh) concerning the deliverance of the message from their Lord. However, Allaah, the Almighty protected the entire Muslim Community from making a general collective mistake, not as individuals. Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) said: *"My nation will not collectively agree on something wrong. The Hand of Allaah, the Almighty will be with the collective group."*[10]

Muslims actively seek the blessings of Allaah, the Almighty for the Mothers of the Believers who are the cohorts of Allaah's Apostle (pbuh). Muslims believe that they were chaste, pure and rightly guided women.

It was the belief of the early Muslim generation scholars that a Muslim is not obliged to follow a certain Islamic school of thought. One may choose to move between the groups based on the strongest and most convincing evidence. Moreover, an unlettered person is not obliged to follow any particular group. An unlettered person's school of thought is the same as the scholar who offers verdicts. A qualified student of Islamic Shariah must act upon what is known to be right, sound and strong evidence on any given issue. The learned person may also move from one school of thought to an other based on the strongest and most sound evidence proved in any discussed issue. Such a person, in fact, is following the early Muslim generation scholars as opposed to making his own decisions in complex issues. Taking a certain stand on any issue must be based on sound deduction with valid evidence from the Holy Qur'aan and

the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh). This is the case with the major scholars of the major schools of thought and other well-known scholars and jurists.

It was the belief of the early Muslim generation scholars that Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali were the four rightly guided companions of the Prophet (pbuh). They also believe that during the era of the four companions, the Caliphate of the Prophet (pbuh) was followed. Scholars base their opinion on the following hadeeth: *"Caliphate in my nation is thirty years, thereafter it becomes kingship."*[11]

It was the belief of the early Muslim generation scholars, that Muslims must believe everything stated and commanded in the Holy Qur'aan. Muslims must avoid all things stated in the Holy Qur'aan to be avoided. Furthermore, Muslims must believe all sound hadeeth reported on the behalf of Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) whether comprehended or not. Muslims must obey the commands of Allaah, the Almighty and His Apostle (pbuh) Furthermore, Muslims must shun away from all things that Allaah, the Almighty has commanded to avoid and elaborated upon by Allaah's Apostle (pbuh). Muslims must execute the teachings of the Holy Qur'aan and the Sunnah to the best of their abilities taking care not to exceed these teachings. Yet, Muslims must also obey the commands reported of the rightly guided companions of the Prophet (pbuh). Muslims must follow all that the Prophet (pbuh) and the rightly guided Caliphs (raa) adhered to in terms of actions, statements and conduct. By doing this, one will follow the complete Sunnah.

Umar bin Abdul-Azeez (raa) once stated: *"Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) and those who took charge after him established a certain base to help us conform to the teachings of the Holy Qur'aan. Conforming to this base strengthens our faith. No one is entitled to change or alter this base. No one can choose to take any other route. He who abides by it is guided to the truth. He who seeks*

victory by obeying them will indeed be victorious. On the other hand, he who neglects them and follows any other path will be misguided and will dwell in the Hellfire." This is in conformity with the hadeeth: *"Avoid innovated matters in your religion as every innovated matter is but a misguidance."* This hadeeth is, in fact, one of the major tenets of the religion of Islaam. This hadeeth is supported by another statement from Allaah's Apostle (pbuh): *"He whosoever innovates (by adding, omitting or even altering) anything in our religion (of Islaam) which is not there originally, is rejected."*[(12)] This the hadeeth again warns Muslims against following innovations in Islaam and all its acts of faith, belief and worship. Innovation includes any new or added practice, conduct, statement, act of worship or anything similar that has no sound, true and documented basis. But, practices that have sound and solid foundations are not categorised as innovations. One might notice that some of the early Muslim generation scholars once stated that: *"This is the best of innovations."* This statement was attributed to Umar bin al-Khattab (raa) when he noticed Muslims praying separately the Taraweeh prayer during the month of Ramadhan. Such a statement, and consequently, such an innovation has a solid basis and foundation as it was the practice of the Prophet (pbuh) to offer such a voluntary prayer in congregation during the month of Ramadhan. However, Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) did not continue this practice fearing that it would become obligatory and some Muslims would not be able to maintain it on a regular basis and thus be punished. During the reign of Umar (raa) this fear was no longer valid. Therefore, Umar (raa) was able to revive this practice. No single Muslim has the right to alter, modify or change any prescribed, known or soundly documented practice of Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) and the early Muslim generation scholars. For example, the call for prayer and the prayer itself must be maintained as practised and offered by Allaah's Apostle (pbuh). This, of course, is based on the fact that the Prophet (pbuh) said: *"Pray (exactly) as you have seen me praying."* This is sound and true hadeeth reported by Bukhaaree. Similarly, Hajj

(pilgrimage) must be maintained in conformity with the practice of Allaah's Apostle (pbuh), who said: "*Take your Hajj rituals from me.*"[(13)]

Yet, Muslims have done things that did not exist during the lifetime of Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) that have been condoned and accepted by the majority of Muslim scholars. Such things are essential for the preservation of the religion of Islaam. One of these actions is the collection of the Holy Qur'aan in one book by Uthman bin Affan (raa) the caliph who feared that Muslims will differ in recitation of the Holy Qur'aan due to the many newcomers Islaam not knowing the Arabic language. The living companions of the Prophet (pbuh) then, approved Uthman's innovation even though this was not done during the life of Allaah's Apostle (pbuh). Similarly, the act of collecting, recording and writing the hadeeth in book form due to fear that those reporting it at the time were approaching death. Moreover, the early generation Muslim scholars condoned and approved the compiling of the Holy Qur'aan and the hadeeth for the same reasons. Additionally, the scholars approved the compilations in Arabic grammar and linguistics due to the fact that learning such a science will help understand the beauty of the Qur'anic style and language. The Muslim scholars approved, as well, writing in the technical terms of the hadeeth. All such matters have been condoned and approved due to the fact that they are essentials in preservation of Islamic Shariah which is assured to us by Allaah, the Almighty. He, the Almighty stated in the Holy Qur'aan, 14:9: "*We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption).*" Also, Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) said: "*This knowledge (of Islaam) will be carried by (some) of the trustworthy generations (who pass it to the other generations). Such authorities will preserve this knowledge from corruption, distortion or alteration of those who might be falsifiers, extremists, ignorant or misunderstand it.*"

Thus, in brief, these were the beliefs of the early Muslim

generation scholars. It is, in fact, pure and clear faith, strong belief and the straight path that follows the Holy Qur'aan and the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh). The statements made, declared, reported or documented from these scholars are what has kept fresh blood flowing through the hearts of the following generations of Muslims. Hopefully, this generation's belief is the belief of the salvaged group, the people who follow the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh). It is indeed, the same belief of the four major scholars from the four schools of thought and all those who followed.

Therefore, we must return to the basic origins of the pure faith and belief of those rightly guided followers of the Holy Qur'aan and the Sunnah. We should stop where they stopped. We should offer our prayers and all other acts of worship as these noble scholars offered. We should adhere wholeheartedly to the Book of Allaah, the Almighty and to the Sunnah of His Prophet (pbuh). We should respect all verdicts resulting from collective agreements. Meanwhile, we must follow the right method in inferring verdicts about issues not known then by using accurate measurements based upon what has been established for us.

Imam an-Nawaawee (raa) said in his book entitled *Al-Athkar*: "*One must realise that the practice of the early Muslim generation scholars is the true, authentic and correct expression of Islamic practices.*" This is the truth. One must not be deceived with mass disapproval of it. Abu Ali al-Fodhail bin Iyadh (raa) once said: "*Follow the right and correct path, even though only few follow it. Avoid the misguided path no matter how many follow it. Do not be deceived with great numbers who wish to destroy themselves with their own doings.*"

This is the only way, indeed, to reform the generations to come. Imam Maalik bin Anas (raa), Imam of Madinah, said it beautifully: "*Reform of the present generation of this Nation of Islaam will not truly be accomplished except by following the*

straight path of the early Muslim generation scholars on which they reformed their entire lives (and the Hereafter). Goodness, however shall continue to prevail in this Islamic Nation." This, of course, is based on the hadeeth: *"A group of my nation will continue to remain on the straight path paying no attention to whosoever discourages them. They will remain as such until they meet their Lord, Allaah, the Almighty in that position."*(14)
Furthermore, Allaah's Apostle (pbuh) said in another sound and well documented hadeeth: *"The example of my nation is like the rain. No one can tell whether the beginning is better than the end."*(15)

Many scholars have summarised the belief of the early Muslim generations. Abu Jaafar al-Tahawee, who died in the year 320 H., wrote a book stating that belief. Then, Ibn Abu al-Izz al-Hanafi, who died in the year 792 H., wrote a commentary and explanation of this book. The latter was entitled: *Sharh al-Aqeedah al-Tahawiyyah* (An Explanation of the Tahawiyyah (book of) Belief). Later, Abu al-Hasan al-Asharee, who died in Baghdad in the year 324 H., wrote *Al-Ibanah An Usul al-Diyanah* (Declaration of the Basis of Religion.) In this book, the author states: *"The statement we declare and the belief we adhere to is: ' We should hold tight to the Book of Allaah, the Almighty, the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh) and whatever is truly reported on behalf of the rightly guided companions of the Prophet (pbuh). We adhere thoroughly to that. We also, believe the same as Abu Abdullaah Ahmad bin Hanbal, and neglect all other disputing statements. "*

There are many other scholars who wrote on the topic of belief. Amongst such authors is al-Saboonee, who died in the year 449H. whose book is entitled: *Aqeedat-ul-Salaf* (The Early Generations Belief). Also, noteworthy is Mowaffaq-ud-Deen bin Qudamah al-Maqdisee and his book entitled *Lamat-ul-Itiqad* (A Glimpse of Belief.) Many other scholars wrote on the same subject. Lastly, we seek Allaah's guidance to the Right, Straight, Pure and Clear

Path of Belief. We also, pray to Allaah, the Almighty to grant us the pure innate devotion which pleases Him and the best moral character acceptable by Him. We, truly request His mercy to let us die while on the path of Islaam which was practised by Allaah's Apostle (pbuh).

Oh Allaah! Let us die as pure Muslims. Let us not be tempted by Satan. Let us not be doomed. Let us not be embarrassed on the Day of Judgement. Oh Allaah! Forgive us, our parents, and all other believers of our past sins, our shortcomings and omissions. Oh Allaah! Guide us to the best of actions, attitudes, behaviour, and way of life.

All praise is due to Allaah, the Almighty.

Servant of the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh):
Abu Mahmoud, Abdul Qadir al-Arnaoot